

Central Intelligence Agency





Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

3 October 1985

| China's Population Control: Enforcement Troubles Persist | 25 X 1 |
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| Summary | |
| Domestic pressures have forced Beijing to adopt a more flexible birth control policy in rural areas. Although couples are still encouraged to delay child-bearing, and sanctions are still applied to families who have unauthorized children, a wider range of exceptions are being allowed for rural families to have a second child. The greater flexibility has not increased the popularity of birth control policies nor made enforcement easier, however. As local officials try to meet centrally mandated population quotas, they continue to employ coercive measures to force submission to sterilizations and abortions. Beijing decries such methods and is taking steps to eliminate them. Chinese leaders are committed to population control, however, and cannot completely eliminate abuses without sacrificing population goals. We believe international criticism of China's birth control policies has marginal effect. | 25X1 |
| This memorandum was prepared by Analysis. Information available as of 3 October 1985 was used in its preparation. | 25 X 1 |
| Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Domestic Policy Branch, China Division, OEA, | 25 X 1 |
| EAM 85-10173 | |
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| Chinese leaders believe that if China is to modernize, the nation's growth rate must be held closely in check so that production gains are not overtaken by population growth. Beijing has worked hard to lower the population growth rate from the 1970 high of 2.6 percent to 1.4 percent in 1981. To achieve Beijing's declared goal of keeping China's year 2000 population under 1.2 billion, the population growth rate must be reduced to under 1 percent for the remainder of the century. Chinese authorities are hoping to meet this target despite the huge numbers of women who will be entering their prime child-bearing years. | 25X |
| Since the mid 1970s, China's birth control policy has been dominated by the "one child per family" dictum. Implementing this policy has been unpopular and politically costly for the regime. Although the record in urban areas and in the most developed sections of rural China has been respectable, in many areas officials have been unable to overcome the traditional prediliction for large families, and for bearing sons to carry on the family line and ensure the parents' welfare in old age. | 25 X ⁻ |
| Recent economic reforms have complicated Beijing's population control efforts: | |
| The breakup of the communes, which used to administer birth control programs in rural areas, has weakened the mechanisms for controlling rural population growth. | |
| An increasing portion of the population is finding employment in small collective or individual enterprises, further weakening the ability of birth control agencies to enforce regulations. | |
| Increasing rural incomes have reduced peasant responsiveness to economic sanctions against multiple child families. | |
| Recent bumper harvests, and resulting grain surpluses, have weakened arguments that China cannot manage to feed more mouths. | 25X |
| Beijing has also been sensitive to non-Han discontent over population control measures, which could fuel unrest in strategically important border regions. Relaxation of birth control policies in minority areas, however, contributes to the resentment the average Chinese feels over these measures. | 25X ² |
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| We believe this judgment is basically correct. In general, both compliance by the copulace and reasonable enforcement of the regulations by officials are at a peak in cities, and diminish as one moves further from urban centers. Abuses do take place in wealthier rural areas as well, however. In the cities abuses are rare for several reasons: the better educated residents are more likely to accept the necessity of the population colicy, there is less economic incentive for a city dweller to have a large family, and egal sanctions against violators—job demotion, loss of subsidies and favored educational treatment for the child, assignment to poorer housing—are more effective than in the countryside. | 2 |
| The difficulties encountered by the central authorities in implementing the policy demonstrate basic problems of the regime—mechanisms for control of local level implementation and for fine tuning of policies are nearly nonexistent, and policy objectives are often contradictory. In order to reduce abuses, Beijing has granted local officials increased flexibility to meet population growth targets. For example, localities are now assigned multiple year population quotas instead of yearly quotas. One family planning official recently suggested to US embassy officers that China is considering adopting a national family planning law which would specificially cover birth control practices. The only way family planning abuses could be completely eliminated, nowever, would be to reduce central pressure to meet population control targets, which | |
| we believe Beijing is unwilling to do. | 2 |
| International Pressures: How Effective? | |
| Although we believe domestic pressures are behind the easing of the "one child per family" policy, Beijing is sensitive to international concerns about its birth control efforts. Chinese leaders are resentful of foreign criticism of what they regard as a necessary internal policy, and one which they have undertaken at considerable political cost. Foreign press coverage of birth control abuses also highlights Beijing's failures in implementing policy, and draws attention to "backward" or "feudal" aspects of Chinese society, which the leadership finds embarrassing. China's reponse to international criticism has been to publicize positive aspects of the policy, and to point out vigorously that abuses in enforcement are illegal under Chinese law. Although Chinese leaders try to put the best face on their efforts for foreign consumption, we believe that international criticism and pressure have little real effect on Chinese birth control efforts. Foreign technical assistance, administered primarily through the United Nations, has helped the regime establish family planning centers and supply contraceptive devices to the population. | 2 |
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| A Note On Evidence | 7 , |
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| The information that is available on the population program is fragmentary. | |

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| how common the abuses are. The massive scale and unpopularity of the birth co- program in rural areas create pressures for local "commandism" that Beijing cannot | |
| contain. | 25X1 |

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